

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Date: October 26, 2007

News Release No.: 07-94

Workers and Employers Affected by Historic Fires Now Eligible for Special Unemployment Benefits and Tax Extensions

SACRAMENTO – Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the federal government, and the Labor and Workforce Development Agency's Employment Development Department (EDD) are moving quickly to aid workers who have lost their jobs because of wildfires in Southern California and employers who were directly affected by the fires.

At the request of Governor Schwarzenegger, President Bush has made Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) available to those impacted by the fires as part of a major disaster declaration for several Southern California counties. While DUA is similar to regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) in benefit amounts and duration, eligibility is somewhat different.

Those eligible for DUA include people affected by the disaster who have a legal right to work in the United States; who are or have been self-employed, or who are unable to establish a valid regular UI claim; or individuals who have exhausted their UI claim benefits. People unable to reach work because of the disaster; those scheduled to begin work that was terminated because of the fires; and people physically unable to work because of a disaster-incurred injury may also be eligible.

The availability of DUA is in addition to other action taken today by Governor Schwarzenegger to assist workers and employers affected by the fires. Thanks to an executive order waiving the one-week waiting period for UI benefits for workers who lost their jobs in this disaster, those workers will be able to start receiving those benefits a little faster.

In California, both DUA and UI claims are processed through the Employment Development Department. In addition, for employers affected by the fires, EDD is offering a 60-day extension to file their state payroll reports and to deposit state payroll taxes with the department without penalty or interest.

"When disaster strikes, our staff does everything within our power to aid workers and businesses who are struggling to regain their footing, even while many of our own workers are personally dealing with the difficulties caused by these fires," EDD Director Patrick Henning said. "Ordinarily, workers do not receive UI benefits for their first week of unemployment. Because of the magnitude of the wildfires in Southern California, the Governor has waived this provision of the law. Our UI staff has already prepared special procedures to ensure that workers receive their benefit checks promptly. In addition, our Tax Branch staff is giving employers affected by these historic fires some extra breathing room when it comes to filing reports and depositing tax payments."

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For Employees Affected by the Fire

As a result of the governor's waiver of the one-week waiting period for UI benefits, claimants will receive two weeks worth of benefits in their first check instead of one week. The waiting period will be waived for six months on all Southern California wildfire-related UI claims beginning with those filed the week of October 21, 2007

The fastest and easiest option for individuals to file claims for UI benefits is on-line at www.edd.ca.gov/fleclaim.htm. Claimants can also file by telephone (phone numbers are listed below).

UI Claim Filing Telephone Numbers:

English..... 1-800-300-5616

Spanish..... 1-800-326-8937

Cantonese..... 1-800-547-3506

Mandarin..... .. 1-866-303-0706

Vietnamese..... 1-800-547-2058

TTY (non-voice)..... 1-800-815-9387

For Employers Affected by the Fires

California employers affected by the fires may request an extension up to 60 days to file their state payroll reports and to deposit state payroll taxes with EDD, without penalty or interest. This extension applies only to the third and fourth quarters of 2007. The extension is granted under Section 1111.5 of the California Unemployment Insurance Code (CUIC).

State payroll taxes include Unemployment Insurance, Employment Training Tax, State Disability Insurance, and California Personal Income Tax. Written requests for extension must be received by EDD with a postmark date of December 20, 2007, or earlier.

To request an extension, employers must send EDD a letter specifically requesting an extension of time under Section 1111.5 of the CUIC, along with the previously unfiled report(s) and payment(s). The letter also must provide detailed information as to why the report or payment could not be submitted in a timely manner.

Employers should mail the letter and tax report or payment to the address specified on their filing form. If an employer has already been charged a late filing or payment penalty that he/she believes may qualify for this extension, the employer should send a written request to:

EDD

P.O. Box 826846, MIC 3A

Sacramento, CA 94246-0001

For further information, visit EDD's Web site or call the EDD Taxpayer Assistance Center at 1-888-745-3886.

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